



“You have B.P.H.” WHAT’S THAT?

B.P.H

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B.P.H. stands for Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia. This is a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate which occurs in most men as they get older.

The prostate is a gland that surrounds the opening of the bladder like a donut and is usually about the size of a small walnut at the age of 20-30. It provides fluid which comes out at the time of ejaculation.

As men age, it can enlarge outwards or inwards or both. As it enlarges the hole of the “donut” can become smaller leading to a man having problems with urination. He may find that he has to hurry to get to the toilet on time. When he gets there he may have to stand and wait for the stream to start. He might have a slow flow, not empty completely and have delayed finish with dribbling. Sometimes there is a small amount of leakage when he leaves the toilet. As well as that he might have to go more often because of the incomplete emptying and also get up several times at night. Occasionally, the man may stop passing urine completely. This is called retention of urine and will need to be relieved by passage of a tube through the penis and in to the bladder. This is called a catheter.

There are various general measures which can help control symptoms. These include reducing the intake of caffeine containing drinks such as tea, coffee, cola and “energy” drinks. The caffeine causes the kidneys to make more urine more quickly and can also irritate the bladder so it is not able to hold enough. Alcohol and some medications can have a similar effect.

The opening of the bladder may relax with some medications which can be helpful to improve the flow. Some medications can “shrink” the prostate but by themselves are unlikely to be helpful. Some

have side effects which can reduce a man’s ability to get an erection. Interestingly, some of the medications which are used to improve erections can also improve bladder emptying.

Often it will be necessary for a man to have an operation. This operation makes the “donut hole” bigger like taking out an apple core. It is often referred to as a “re-bore”. Its technical name is a Trans-Urethral Resection of Prostate (TURP). It is done with a scope passed through the opening of the penis. The pieces removed are then sent to pathology to be examined. At Cairns Urology we have been doing this operation as day surgery since 1997. This reduces the likelihood of hospital acquired infection, significantly reduces costs and frees up hospital beds for those patients who need them. There are other surgical procedures designed to achieve the same result but they do not seem to be better.

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